

Two Times

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Summary: Will Neo be able to solve the biggest puzzle the Matrix has thrown at him?

Two Times

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Disclaimer: You all know the drill; if you've heard of them before, they're not mine.

Warning: This is pretty fucked up, I don't know if anyone but me will understand the ending and what it means. But try.

Two Times

[Part One]

"Good morning."

Morpheus had a seat next to Tank as he, Neo and Trinity greeted him with a nod. Neo had a genuinely disgusted look on his face, spooning up his slop and letting it drop into the bowl again. After five months, he still wasn't used to the so-called food on the ship. Trinity noticed his silent protest and shoved an elbow in his side, making him turn his head and raise an eyebrow questioningly at her.

"Be a man, Neo." She laughed and shook her head at his contorted expression and then continued eating her own breakfast. Morpheus saved him from having to force it down, though as he brought up the mission for the evening.

"So, are you ready to go in tonight?" he asked ironically.

"Ready as we'll ever be, you know that." Neo replied, happy for the distraction from his food. Trinity was more serious.

"Who exactly is this girl we've got to find? I think we should know a bit about her before we change her entire existence."

Morpheus nodded.

"Yes, I agree. Well. What I know about her I know from the Oracle, so my knowledge is limited. Apparently she's part of some kind of extremist revolutionary group, they're known as the Warlocks and they're wanted for weapon smuggling and various terrorist acts. She's got a reputation for a short temper and a violent nature, so don't underestimate her. She's a smart girl and she can be trouble, even though she's only seventeen. She knows what she's doing and so even if it may seem like an easy mission to you, I don't want you taking it too easy."

"Of course not."

"We know the Warlock group are holding a meeting tonight and she is bound to be there. You two are to contact a man who calls himself Kader. We have been looking at this man for a while, he's also part of the group, and we know that he's going to be at The White Rabbit at eleven o'clock tonight before the meeting. Locate him and get the location of the meeting."

Neo and Trinity shot a glance at each other when Morpheus mentioned The White Rabbit. It was a place neither of them would ever forget. Not for the music, not for the drinks and not for the seething masses of intoxicated people thrashing around to the thumping beats. It was where they first met.

Neo smiled to himself. That period in his life was a jumbled up mess of memories, dreams and most of nightmares, but those few minutes when he first met Trinity were minutes he would never forget. Ever.

"Are you listening to me Neo?" He sat up straight and looked at his captain. He may have been the One but Morpheus would still always be the one in control.

"Yeah. Kader. Find him. I got it."

Morpheus raised an eyebrow at him and shook his head.

"Rightâ€¦we'll get to work now. There are a few pipes that need some welding, Trinity. And Neo, I need you to get into a new sector for me."

The discovery of new sectors of the Matrix was becoming quite frequent now. The machines were well aware that Neo was the greatest threat the humans had imposed on them yet, but they weren't about to let that stop them. As Neo gradually decoded the original Matrix bit by bit, the machines were almost as quickly creating more and more new areas of it. So at one end the humans were destroying the Matrix, but at the other the machines were weaving more of it. Morpheus was definitely right when he said this was only the beginning. These machines were highly intellectually developed, probably even more than human beings, and they were not giving up without a fight. There was a long way to go.

It seemed like the day passed slower than usual, but it wasn't

strange since Trinity and Neo were so looking forward to their evening mission, it being the only break they could get from the cold and boring steel confines of the Nebuchadnezzar. But when evening finally arrived, they were more than ready to go. Tank and Morpheus got them strapped up and the last thing they each registered in the real world was the familiar unpleasant feeling of the metal spike being jammed into the back of their skulls. It wouldn't matter how many times they entered the Matrix, that cold painful tingle in the head was not a feeling you could get used to.

When Trinity opened her eyes, she found herself in a dark room. It was damp and the wallpaper was peeling in the corners but she felt right at home. Seconds later she heard a little buzzing behind her and a hand touched her shoulder. Closing her eyes, she relished the feeling of him; displays of affection weren't always possible on the ship, since privacy was so incredibly scarce. Neo turned her around to face him and she kissed him lightly on the cheek.

"Mmmm" he whispered smiling. She had trouble keeping herself from kissing him again and again, she wanted him so much. Especially when he had to go and look so damn good.

"God you're sexy, Neo. You know that?"

His smug smile said it all. Trinity laughed and started out the door.

"Come on, Neo."

"You go ahead." She knew what he was doing and let him have his fun as he took all of her in, walking off in her more-than-tight leather trousers.

Finally he shook his head at himself and followed. It was still so hard for him to believe his luck.

Outside, it was raining hard. The splatters of the drops against the pavement sounded sharply in his ears. It was too late at night for people, or sensible people at least, to be on the streets in this part of town, so instead of bowing their heads to protect their faces, Neo simply forced the raindrops away from his and Trinity's heads. A virtual umbrella. They moved quickly and determined through the dark streets. Once they had entered this world, they didn't joke around. It was too dangerous now that they were hunted enemies of the system. Clad in black leather and with a concentrated look on their faces, their eyes hidden behind a pair of dark lenses, people either avoided them completely or hurried by if they happened to cross their path. Neo couldn't help but enjoy the power. They arrived at The White Rabbit at five to eleven and they walked straight to the bar as soon as they entered. Even though it had no effect on them, they would never pass up the chance to taste something other than the goop they had to eat every day aboard the ship.

"What will it be?" the bartender asked them. Trinity recognized him from somewhere but she couldn't quite place him. They ordered their drinks and turned to face the crowd. In the flashing lights it was almost impossible to separate one face from another. Trinity looked at Neo; she sized him up and nodded to herself. He was quite a catch. He felt her eyes and caught her ogling him, but she wasn't the least bit embarrassed. Had it been anyone else than him she would certainly

have started blushing, but there was a sincerity in Neo's eyes that made her feel so at home with him. Sometimes it scared her — the fact that he could turn her to putty in his hands just with a look or a smile or a touch. She hated being so vulnerable but she wouldn't trade it for the world. Any of them.

"What are you staring at? Huh?"

He tried being serious but had to touch her. She closed her eyes and breathed in his smell as he pulled her up to him.

Suddenly his whole body stiffened.

"He's here."

Trinity looked around to see where he was, but Neo was already on his way. Pushing past him she stood in his way.

"Wait Neo. We have to approach this carefully if we want any answers. Let me."

She elbowed her way through the crowd and soon saw the man they were looking for. Leaning against the wall by the bathroom door. Trinity walked up to him, slowly and seductively, and stood right in front of him. Neo placed himself discreetly a bit further down the wall, not far enough to be able to step in if it was necessary.

"So you're Kader?"

The man looked up startled.

"Do I know you?"

She smiled and licked her lips, moving closer until they were almost touching. In the corner Neo was feeling a little uncomfortable.

"Not yet. I hear you have a little — engagement later tonight. Care to tell me where it is you're going?"

Kader swallowed and looked around nervously.

"I don't know what you're talking about. Go away, I'm busy."

"I think you should tell me, Kader. You don't want to get me angry."

Kader straightened as he felt the barrel of a gun being pushed into his side.

"What are you, cops? I ain't telling you guys shit!"

Neo had approached and it was evident that these two meant it.

"No," Neo answered, "we can give you into a lot more shit. Now take us to the meeting and no one will be in any danger."

Kader took another look around and realised he really didn't have a choice.

"Alright then. Follow me. But don't expect a warm welcome when we get

there."

Trinity and Neo exchanged a look. They weren't impressed.

Leaving the club, Trinity caught another glimpse of the bartender. He was looking at her.

"Strange," she thought, but didn't let it get to her. It wasn't until later that she realised who it wasâ€¦

It was only ten minutes away. A run down motel, but instead of going to one of the rooms, Kader fished out a key from his pocket and led them to the back of the building to a partially hidden door and they descended a staircase until they found themselves in the basement. Kader walked in and around twenty people lifted their heads and nodded to greet him. Their expressions changed drastically though when they noticed Neo and Trinity behind him.

"What the fuck..?" one of them said, standing up and reaching for the gun tucked into his jeans. Neo simply looked at the gun and the guy seemed quite frustrated when he realised it wouldn't come out.

"Hello. Don't be alarmed, we won't be staying long," Neo started. The guy with the gun just stared at them and muttered a little "Fuck you" under his breath. Suddenly a woman in the corner stood up wide eyed.

"You're Thomas Anderson, aren't you?"

A rush went through the crowd. They had all seen the security camera video of the massacre of 65 soldiers. By these two. Neo and Trinity looked at each other, surprised. The group definitely had more and deeper contacts than they had expected. That video was the only documentation of them existing, and it was classified government property. The cover-up after that episode had been more than extensive.

"The name's Neo, but yes, I'm him. I'm sure you've all figured out who this is," he said gesturing to his partner. Another man was stepping out of the shadows now; he approached slowly and stood across from Trinity, staring at her stone-faced for at least half a minute. Finally a smile began to form on his face and he held out his hand.

"Holy shit. Trinity." She shook it, trying to keep a serious disposition. "You two are fucking legends, you know that? What am I saying, of course you do! Wha..why are you here, how did you hear about us? Wow. I don't believe this. Here," he said, pushing over a overturned crate, "have a seat."

Trinity spoke for the first time: "No thank you, we'll be leaving now. We came for someone."

—

You know you have to come with us. You know you don't have a choice. We've been looking for you.

—

"Who said that?"

The girl turned around sharply. That voice. She knew that voice. It had spoken to her in a dreams, and now it was after her when she was awake.

"That's it, I'm laying off the powder. I'm going crazyâ€|" she mumbled to herself and continued cleaning her handgun.

—

You knew we were coming for you. And now we're here.

—

"Shut up."

—

We need you and you need us.

—

"This is insane, no, I'm insane, I'm the one hearing voices," she thought. Throwing down her gun, she walked to the door leading into the main hall where the others were probably beginning to show up. She froze in the doorway.

"Who the hell are you?!" she yelled at the strangers. They looked likeâ€|she'd seen them before somewhere. She was desperately trying to hide her nervousness. There was a man and a woman, both in black and sunglasses, despite the dim lighting in the room.

Her mind was racing to find out where she had seen this image before, and at the same time keep her exterior looking focused and imposing. She was never unconcentrated, but there was something about that man that scared her shitless. Sifting her memory to find out where she had seen these people before, her train of thought was interrupted by the voice. It wasn't in her head, but it still sounded close by and far away at the same time.

—

It was in a dream. That's where you saw us. But you see, it wasn't a dream.

—

She froze. Ever so slowly she lifted her eyes to the man's face and came to the realization that she was looking at the owner of that voice. He stared back at her, and it was almost as if she could feel his eyes, even though they were hidden behind the black lenses.

—

Yes, it's me. Don't be alarmed, the answers are coming.

—

Kader interrupted the silence.

"Mips, you alright? Don't you recognize them? They'reâ€¦"

"Shut up, Kader." He did. Mips was apparently the leader in this place.

She walked across the room to them. Every step was agony for her, but she couldn't resist. She was being drawn to him. The world around her began to melt, there was no other way to explain it, and after a few seconds all that was left was blackness. Mips stood there in the darkness, alone and scared, not sure whether she was dead.

"We've been looking for you, Mips."

She spun around to find the owner of the voice. It was the woman.

"Whereâ€¦where am I?"

The man answered her.

"You're in a dream. But one you've been in your whole life. And we're here to get you out of this dream."

"I don't understandâ€¦Iâ€¦what just happened? Am I dead or something?"

"No, Mips. Tell me, have you ever heard of the Matrix?"

She looked like she'd seen a ghost. Never in her life had she told anyone about her dreams â€" never. As much as they scared her and as much as she wanted to forget them, the terrible visions would never stop haunting her. There was so much pain, so much blood and suffering and violence. And there was nothing that could bring back those all-too vivid nightmares than the word "matrix".

"How do you know about that?"

"It's a very long story. And we can tell it to you if you want us to. But listen: if you come with us now, you will never go back to your life. We'll show the truth, Mips. You will never again have to move between realities. This other reality you can see in your sleep â€" that the world you will enter. It may be a hard life, and many times you will probably regret your choice, but you will know. No more nightmares, no more questions. Is that what you want?"

Mips was breathing hard.

"Yes."

Neo fished his hand into his pocket and took out what looked like two pills. One was red, one was blue. He held out his hand with the pills in it and said to her:

"If you take the blue pill, you will wake up in your bed and your life will continue as it did before. You won't remember any of this happening. If you take the red pill, you will come with us, and we will show you the real truth. The truth behind the dreams. The choice

is yours."

Mips stood and watched the two strangers. They were offering her a new life, but was she prepared to accept it? Her eyes moved from one pill to another. She was afraid; of them, of where she would be going, but most of all, she was afraid of what the truth was. But she couldn't resist the fire in the red capsule. In one swift movement, she reached for it and swallowed it dry. And smiled.

"I've never made a thoroughly thought-through decision in my life. I'm not about to start now."

Trinity chuckled at her remark, but Neo seemed unusually serious. He turned to her, seeming to understand what she was thinking, and communicated an order without saying a word.

"Let's go," she said to Mips. The blackness began to melt away, and suddenly Mips found herself in some kind of alleyway. It took her a second to find her guides behind her.

"What happened? Jesus, who are you guys?"

This time Neo had to smile. He still got a kick out of the mystery and power he possessed.

"Soon, Mips. Soon," he replied and they began walking out into the street. She had no choice but to follow stunned and hope for the best.

"They're on their way. I've got them covered."

He hung up and rubbed his eyes, then put on a pair of horn-rimmed glasses, careful not to lose sight of them. He took out a grey hat from his pocket and placed it on his bald head.

He was grateful there was no one around, so there was nobody to get in the way. Standing on the corner watching them, it was hard for him to contain himself from just shooting them right then and there. They weren't going to get out of this one. They would never see it coming.

When they were about to round the next corner sixty feet away, the short man took a quick look around and followed them. He snickered to himself at them.

"So predictable," he thought, and touched the gun hidden under his black leather jacket.

"Neo, I think we're being followed." Trinity was nervously looking back over her shoulder, but Neo didn't seem to be affected by it.

"No we're not, Trin. I would know, wouldn't I?" Still, he stole a quick glance at the dark streets behind them, as an instinct just to be sure. Even if there was someone there, it was too dark to see anything. A little old lady's worst nightmare.

They kept walking, but there was no denying it. There was someone there. Neo was uneasy; this wasn't supposed to happen. How come he couldn't sense the person? He could always feel when there was a

person near. Even an agent. Especially an agent.

"Stop."

That voice. Trinity and Neo stopped dead in their tracks and turned as slowly as was possible. There, in the dim light from the street, stood the silhouette of a man that was all too familiar. The silhouette walked in their direction, and the closer he got, the more they were assured of who it was. Trinity now recognized who this bartender was. Behind the hat and glasses lurked the face that haunted her nightmares.

"Cypher!" she whispered. Mips looked from Trinity to the man and back again. Neo didn't make a sound.

"Yes, my friends! Thought you'd gotten rid of me, didn't you? But you see, those machines are so much nicer than you'd think. But you'll never understand that now that you're going to die, will you?"

Trinity was having trouble breathing from shock, and now Neo intervened.

"You can't kill us, Cypher."

"That's what you think, pretty boy! Why do you think you couldn't detect me, huh? You think I'm stupid?! The machines are a lot further ahead of you. You're what I would call 'screwed'!" Cypher smiled sarcastically at him, pulling out an extremely large handgun from his coat, the kind agents were equipped with, and pointed it directly at his face.

Mips could only watch in confusion, but now she decided to prove that she could take care of herself. With one swift movement, she kicked the gun of Cypher's hand and began running like hell.

"Shit!" Cypher yelled as the gun flew into a pile of garbage cans with only a metallic clank to determine where it had landed.

Neo forced himself to start running, and grabbed Trinity fiercely by the arm to pull her out of her state of shock.

After a few seconds she managed to snap out it and she spurted off into the darkness after Mips.

Not far away, the alley split in two directions. Trinity heard Neo behind her, and decided he would have to trust her. She went left. She clenched her fists to keep herself focused and to keep her mind off the fact that she was being chased by a dead man. As far as she could remember, there would a small exit onto the street around the next corner. But Cypher would know that too. They didn't have a choice, there was no other way out.

A shot sounded behind her, and a bullet ricocheted off the wall beside her. He wasn't going to give up. She didn't have time to worry about Neo, she had to believe that he would take care of himself, even though he didn't know the city as well as she did.

"Tank, what's going on, where are they?" Morpheus was more than worried by the fact that they had disappeared from the monitor, and

even more when Tank with a shrug admitted he didn't have an explanation either.

"They must be on the run. But from what? Why would Neo run from anything?"

"I don't know, Tank. But we need to find them. Something is very wrong in there."

"Give it up, Trinity! I'm gonna kill you no matter what you do!"

Cypher's words didn't scare her anymore; she was only focused on getting Neo to safety. Then she would deal with the bastard. Neo was running by her side now, and they could see the strip of light between two walls, coming from the street lights.

"You go first, Neo. I'll handle Cypher." Trinity ordered as she pulled out her gun.

"No, I'm not leaving you."

"Yes you are!" she said and pushed him onto the street. He looked at her and forced himself to keep on going.

He heard two shots being fired, and turning around he saw Trinity running out of the alley.

"Thank god!" he sighed and slowed down to let her catch up.

Another shot. She fell. Neo stopped and stared in disbelief.

It couldn't be. He turned and ran to her, just as Cypher was stepping out of the shadows, and he saw a small pool of blood forming on the pavement where she lay. He sat down next to her and picked up her head. She was alive.

"I told you I was gonna get you, didn't I, you little bitch?"

Cypher laughed at the situation.

"So here I am again. Except this time, you lose! No one's going to save you now, are they?"

"Shut up!" Neo was frantically trying to help Trinity, but he couldn't do anything; it was as if his powers were being blocked.

"Can't do anything, can you? You see, I told you."

"_Shut up_! You bastard!"

Trinity could feel the warmth of the blood in her mouth and knew somehow that Neo couldn't possibly help her. Words wouldn't come out of her throat. She could only look at his eyes and hope he would understand how much she loved him. Tears were running down his cheeks and one of the warm drops fell on her lips.

"Isn't this just heartbreaking?" Cypher interrupted the silence.

"Even I hadn't imagined it would be this much fun watching you die."

Trinity suddenly lurched forward and made a small noise in pain. She took one last look into Neo's beautiful eyes and let herself black out. The pain went away.

Tank and Morpheus turned around in surprise as a long steady beep was heard from Trinity's monitor. Morpheus ran to her body, she had stopped breathing and the screen above her head showed no signs of life.

"Oh my god. No. This isn't happening. No!"

Tank simply stood silent in shock.

"Well, one down, one to go!" Cypher laughed and pointed the gun at him. Neo was more than willing to die. He couldn't move, and he wasn't going to try.

"Kill me. You killed my reason to live. So go ahead and kill me. Shoot!"

He closed his eyes, waiting for that familiar feeling of the hot metal entering his flesh.

It never came.

At nineteen minutes past two in the morning, a collective gasp went through the crew of the Nebuchadnezzar as they woke up from a terrible nightmare. Simultaneously.

In his and Trinity's room, a shaken Neo sat up in his bed. Next to him, Trinity had also woken and was looking at him. Both were short of breath and sweating.

"Neo, I just had this terrible dream."

"That's strange. So did I."

He turned to face her, and when he did, the most terrible sight met him. There, right next to him, was the shape of a woman, but instead of her familiar features, all Neo saw were little green figures and numbers trickling down her face.

End of Part One.

End
file.